

VZCZCXYZ0007
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHAB #0566/01 1501007
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 301007Z MAY 07
FM AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
TO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
INFO RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0559

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ABIDJAN 000566

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/W AND PRM/AFR/CACHANG
STATE PASS TO USAID/OFDA/DDEBERNARDO
MONROVIA FOR SEIRIZ AND USAID/OFDA/RQUINBY
GENEVA FOR RMA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREF PHUM IV LI](#)

SUBJECT: MONITORING AND EVALUATION REPORT FOR SEARCH FOR
COMMON GROUND (SFCG) LIBERIA: SPRMCO06CA146

ABIDJAN 00000566 001.2 OF 002

[¶1.](#) Summary: The Abidjan-based Refugee Coordinator (RefCoord) conducted a monitoring and evaluation assessment of the PRM-funded Search For Common Ground (SFCG) project, "Mass Information in Support of Liberian Refugee Repatriation and Reintegration." SFCG's activities seem well conceived and form an integral part of the information resources available to Liberian refugees in countries of asylum. Although most Liberian refugees will decide whether or not to return to Liberia before the June 30 deadline on the basis of their own personal knowledge, SFCG's information activities have provided refugees with an additional source of information against which refugees can judge the accuracy and credibility of other actors encouraging Liberians to return at this time. End Summary.

[¶2.](#) The Abidjan-based Refugee Coordinator (RefCoord) conducted a monitoring and evaluation assessment of the PRM-funded Search For Common Ground (SFCG) project, "Mass Information in Support of Liberian Refugee Repatriation and Reintegration." RefCoord held discussions with SFCG staff, refugees, and partner agencies in Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire on several different occasions. RefCoord met SFCG staff, Rebecca Besant (Country Director) and Oscar Bloh (Head of Programming) from their Liberia office, and Evariste Sadie (SFCG Cote d'Ivoire) during a mission to Tabou, Cote d'Ivoire. RefCoord also discussed SFCG's programming with UNHCR personnel in Monrovia, Nzerekore, Guiglo, and Tabou.

OBJECTIVES AND INDICATORS

[¶3.](#) OBJECTIVE 1: Provide information to refugee populations in order to enable them to make informed decisions about return.

- SFCG has prepared 24 "Situation Report" programs and expects to produce a further 12 by the end of the project. This is below the target of 54 such programs;
- SFCG expects to meet their target of 5 video products by the end of the project;
- SFCG has conducted two of the three drama tours in Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, and Sierra Leone;
- SFCG has exceeded their target of 52 segments featuring repatriation and reintegration of refugees;
- SFCG will report on the increase in the number of persons able to discern between correct and incorrect information on return in their final report.

¶4. OBJECTIVE 2: Facilitate dialogue between refugee populations and UNHCR and between refugee populations and their home countries.

- SFCG has established 25 of the targeted 50 listener groups in Guinea and Sierra Leone. With the rapid reduction in refugee camp populations, it is unlikely SFCG will meet this target. It is also possible that so many groups are no longer necessary given the smaller camp population numbers;
- SFCG will determine the remaining indicators during their final survey to be conducted during the third quarter. Results of this survey will be reported in the final report.

PROGRAM ISSUES

¶5. Cross-cutting Goals: SFCG's activities target all Liberian refugee groups and aim to provide key information to returnees in all sectors, such as education and health, important in the decision making process to return or remain in countries of asylum. The project does not have a capacity building component nor does it seek sustainability of activities.

¶6. Coordination: SFCG works closely with a variety of actors, particularly UNHCR. SFCG has a sub-agreement with UNHCR Cote d'Ivoire and completed its work under a sub-agreement with UNHCR in Sierra Leone at the end of 2006. SFCG programs are regularly broadcast through different public radio stations that have a strong audience among the refugee populations outside Liberia.

¶7. Admin/Financial Oversight: SFCG staff have all signed a Code of Conduct as part of their employment. SFCG staff reported adequate administrative and financial oversight, but RefCoord did not have the opportunity to discuss these issues in depth with SFCG officials.

ABIDJAN 00000566 002.2 OF 002

¶8. Security: SFCG reported that some of their staff had been stopped by gunmen while driving through Danane in Cote d'Ivoire and had to pay bribes at checkpoints along the road in Cote d'Ivoire. In one incident, one of the SFCG female drivers was arrested and they had to pay the officer the equivalent of twenty U.S. dollars for her release. SFCG had to pay approximately ten to fifteen U.S. dollars at each of eight to ten different checkpoints.

¶9. Problems: SFCG reported difficulties early on in the project in getting access to Liberian refugees in the Buduburam refugee camp in Ghana. RefCoord was told that these problems were resolved during the project and that UNHCR later broadcast their programming to refugee groups in the camp. Although SFCG is to conduct a final survey during the third quarter on the effectiveness of their information program, SFCG staff RefCoord spoke to did not have a clear plan as to how they would gather the necessary information from refugees that have already returned and with whom SFCG is no longer in contact.

¶10. HQs Oversight: SFCG Monrovia staff reported they had not received any visits from their Washington office but were in regular phone contact with their HQs.

¶11. Cooperation with PRM: SFCG has submitted all quarterly reports and has shared copies of their thorough base-line survey conducted at the beginning of the project. Although RefCoord has not had trouble setting up meetings with SFCG staff when requested, SFCG has not taken the initiative to inform RefCoord when drama tours and other programming was being broadcast to enable monitoring of these field-based exercises.

COMMENT

¶12. SFCG's activities seem well conceived and form an integral part of the information resources available to Liberian refugees considering whether or not to return to Liberia. RefCoord verified in most locations that refugees recalled specific information and details of SFCG's visits to their communities to discuss the situation in Liberia. SFCG also utilizes former refugees from many of the same camps who are able to provide refugees with first-hand experience about conditions in Liberia. This can also have a downside. For example, one SFCG staff RefCoord spoke to explained that she told refugees in Guinea that health care in Liberia was not completely free as the government was announcing and explained how much she pays at a public clinic in central Monrovia for treatment. RefCoord noted that most of the refugees she was speaking to at this particular camp come from upper-Lofa County and asked if she had discussed the situation in upper-Lofa or only with that particular clinic in Monrovia.

¶13. These details, however, probably play a minor role in whether or not Liberians are deciding to return or remain in their countries of asylum. In that regard, SFCG's activities add one more actor to the number of players providing information on changes in Liberia. In many cases, refugees do not trust other sources of information, such as UNHCR, under the belief that they are trying to paint a positive picture of the situation in Liberia just to convince them to return. In this regard, SFCG's activities have played an important role in disseminating details of the return and repatriation process to a wide audience in several countries of asylum.

HOOKS